

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (canceled)

Claim 2 (Currently amended): An improved process for inhibiting bacterial growth in an aqueous process medium comprising adding a hop acid, characterized in, that the process comprises:

- (a) dissolving the hop acid in an aqueous alkaline medium to form an aqueous alkaline hop acid solution;
- (b) combining the aqueous alkaline hop acid solution with yeast in a yeast growing tank wherein yeast growing proceeds under aerobic conditions to form a yeast/aqueous alkaline hop acid mixture, and
- (c) introducing the yeast/aqueous alkaline hop acid mixture into an aqueous process medium for fermentation under anaerobic conditions; and
- ~~(e)~~(d) continuously adding an effective amount of the aqueous alkaline hop acid solution, pre fermentation, to the aqueous process medium, wherein the pH of the aqueous alkaline hop acid solution is higher than the pH of the aqueous process.

Claim 3 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the aqueous alkaline hop acid solution contains from about 2 to about 40 wt. % of hop acid.

Claim 4 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the pH of the aqueous alkaline hop acid solution ranges from about 7.5 to about 13.0.

Claim 5 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the hop acid is a natural hop acid or derivative thereof; an isomerized hop acid or derivative thereof; or mixtures thereof.

Claim 6 (Original): A process according to claim 5, wherein the natural hop acid or derivative thereof is alpha acid, beta acid, tetrahydroalpha acid, hexahydrobeta acid, or mixtures thereof.

Claim 7 (Original): A process according to claim 5, wherein the isomerized hop acid or derivative thereof is isoalpha acid, rhoisoalpha acid, hexahydroisoalpha acid, or mixtures thereof.

Claim 8 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the aqueous alkaline medium comprises from about 1 to about 5 wt. % of potassium hydroxide, sodium hydroxide or mixtures of potassium hydroxide and sodium hydroxide.

Claim 9 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the temperature of the aqueous process medium is lower than 100° C.

Claim 10 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the concentrations of the hop acid within the aqueous process medium is in the range of 0.1 - 50 ppm.

Claim 11 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the aqueous process medium is a process medium in a yeast production process.

Claim 12 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the aqueous alkaline hop acid solution is prepared according to the following process:

- a. heating an aqueous medium;
- b. adding a hop acid to the heated aqueous medium of step (a) to form a solution wherein a final concentration of the hop acid is within a predefined range of concentration;
- c. adding an alkali metal hydroxide to a second aqueous medium to obtain a solution having a pre-defined pH;
- d. mixing the alkaline medium from step (c) with the hop acid aqueous medium from step (b);
- e. keeping the mixture from step (d) in a temperature range used in step (a) within a pre-defined time period;
- f. separating a solution of hop acid from the mixture of step (e); and
- g. cooling the solution of hop acid from step (f) to a temperature below about 20° C.

Claim 13 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 12, wherein the aqueous alkaline hop acid solution is cooled to a temperature below 10° C.

Claim 14 (Currently amended): An improved process for inhibiting bacterial growth in a distillery comprising:

(a) contacting a fermentable solution with an effective antibacterial amount of an isomerized alkaline hop acid solution or derivative thereof, to form an alkaline hop acid fermentable solution;

(b) adding the alkaline hop acid fermentable solution of step (a) to ~~one or both of a yeast growing tank comprising yeast, wherein yeast growing proceeds under aerobic conditions; and to a fermentor tank; and~~

(c) adding the contents in the yeast growing tank to the fermentor tank, wherein fermentation proceeds under anaerobic conditions.

Claim 15 (Original): A process according to claim 14 wherein, the isomerized hop acid or derivative thereof is isoalpha acid, rhoisoalpha acid, tetrahydroisoalpha acid, hexahydroisoalpha acid, or mixtures thereof.

Claim 16 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 14 wherein, the fermentable solution is stored as a concentrate and diluted with water prior to the addition of the isomerized alkaline hop acid in step (a).

Claim 17 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 16 wherein, the pH of the isomerized alkaline hop acid solution is greater than the pH of the fermentable solution .

Claim 18 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 14 wherein, the concentration of isomerized alkaline hop acid or derivative thereof in the alkaline hop acid fermentable solution ranges from about 1 to about 20 ppm.

Claim 19 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 14 wherein, the concentration of alkaline isomerized hop acid or derivative thereof in the alkaline hop acid fermentable solution ranges from about 2 to about 4 ppm.

Claim 20 (Previously presented) A process according to claim 14, wherein the addition of the alkaline hop acid fermentable solution in step (b) occurs at a temperature of less than about 30° C.

Claim 21 (Previously presented): A process according to claim 2, wherein the temperature of the aqueous process medium is lower than 30° C.